

of mine, until 1949, I, too, was silenced by his classmates and their wives. There will always be those who will stand in your way. Don't resent them. Just feel sorry for them, and hold your head high."

Like so many military spouses past and present, this exceptional woman, an officer's wife who spent World War II toiling in a munitions factory, has worked and sacrificed to defend our freedom. And General, just as we salute you today, we salute her as well.

When Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., became an officer, he was the only black officer in our Air Corps. Now the Air Force has 4,000. Minorities and women remain underrepresented in our officer corps, but General Davis is here today as living proof that a person can overcome adversity and discrimination, achieve great things, turn skeptics into believers, and through example and perseverance, one person can bring truly extraordinary change.

So often today, America faces the challenge of helping to prevent conflicts overseas, fueled by these very divisions of race and ethnicity and religious differences. On Saturday I am going on a mission of peace to the Middle East, still embroiled in such conflicts. We cannot meet these challenges abroad unless we have healed our divisions at home.

To all of us, General Davis, you are the very embodiment of the principle that from diversity we can build an even stronger unity and that in diversity we can find the strength to prevail and advance. If we follow your example, America will always be strong, growing stronger. We will always be a leader for democracy, opportunity, and peace. We will be able to fulfill the promise of our Founders, to be a nation of equal rights and dignity for all, whose citizens pledge to each other our lives, our fortune, our sacred honor, in pursuit of that more perfect Union.

I am very, very proud, General Davis, of your service. On behalf of all Americans, I thank you. I thank you for everything you have done, for everything you have been, for what you have permitted the rest of us Americans to become.

Now I would like to ask the military aide to read the citation, after which, I invite General Davis' sister, Mrs. Elnora Davis

McLendon, to join me in pinning on the General's fourth star.

Read the citation.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:49 p.m. in Room 450 of the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to original Tuskegee Airmen Col. Charles McGee, USAF (Ret.), Lt. Col. Woodrow Crockett, USAF (Ret.), and Col. William A. Campbell, USAF (Ret.); Janet Langhart, wife of Defense Secretary William S. Cohen; and former Gov. Doug Wilder of Virginia.

Remarks on Lighting the National Christmas Tree

December 9, 1997

Thank you very much. Thank you, John. I want to thank you and all the people responsible, again, for this wonderful, wonderful evening. I'd like to thank our performers: Tony Bennett, Leona Mitchell, Jose Feliciano, the "Cats" crew, the Paul Hill choir, Al Roker, who has been a great Santa Claus tonight. I'd like to thank our Brownie and Cub Scout, Jessica Scott and Edgar Allen Sheppard. And of course, I'd like to thank Sammy Sosa and Mrs. Sosa for joining us tonight. We're delighted to see them all.

Hillary and I look forward to this every year, and this, as you may know, is the 75th anniversary of this Christmas tree lighting. For us, Christmas always starts with this Pageant of Peace. Tonight we celebrate the beginning of this season of peace and hope, of sharing and giving, of family and friends. We celebrate the birth of the child we know as the Prince of Peace, who came into the world with only a stable's roof to shelter him but grew to teach a lesson of love that has lasted two millennia. "Blessed are the peacemakers," he said, and his words still call us to action.

The lights we illuminate tonight are more than the flickering bulbs on a beautiful Colorado blue spruce. They represent millions of individual acts of courage and compassion that light our lives. Like the Star of Bethlehem, these lights shine the promise of hope and renewal. Like the candles of Hanukkah, they stand for freedom against tyranny. Like the lamps that will soon light the mosques

in the coming months of Ramadan, they evoke a call to community.

We light this tree in Washington, but all over the world we thank God that the light of peace is glowing as never before, in Northern Ireland, in Bosnia, in the Middle East. In the coming year, let us rededicate ourselves to building the bonds of peace on Earth. Let those of us who are Americans express our appreciation to those who serve us in uniform, represented tonight by the United States Air Force Band, who help to preserve peace for us.

Now I'd like to ask Sammy and Jessica and Edgar to come up here and join me as we light the Christmas tree, our national tree. Let the spirit of the holidays, of peace and good will, be our beacon all year long. Merry Christmas. Happy New Year. May God bless you all.

Now put your hands on the switch, and I'll count down to one. Three, two, one. Light the tree!

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:50 p.m. on the Ellipse during the annual Christmas Pageant of Peace. In his remarks, he referred to John J. Betchkal, president, Christmas Pageant of Peace; and baseball player Sammy Sosa, National League Most Valuable Player, and his wife, Sonia.

Message on the Observance of Hanukkah, 1998

December 9, 1998

Warm greetings to all those celebrating Hanukkah.

For eight consecutive nights during this twilight of the year, in Jewish homes across America and around the world, the flames of the menorah will once again brighten steadfast spirits and gladden faithful hearts. Commemorating the rededication of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem more than two millennia ago, Hanukkah is a joyous celebration of the victory of the righteous over oppression and a reaffirmation of religious freedom as a fundamental right of people everywhere. This Festival of Lights is a reminder to all of us of the many blessings that brighten our lives: the love of God, the gift of freedom, the strength of family and community, and the hope of lasting peace.

As millions of families gather to kindle the flames of the menorah and to recite the special prayers of Hanukkah, Hillary and I extend our best wishes for a memorable celebration and for happiness and peace in the coming year.

Bill Clinton

Memorandum on the Eleanor Roosevelt Award for Human Rights *December 9, 1998*

Memorandum for the Secretary of State

Subject: The Eleanor Roosevelt Award for Human Rights

This month we mark the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations General Assembly declaration affirming a universal standard of human rights and fundamental freedoms. In so doing, we also honor the legacy of Eleanor Roosevelt, who served as the first Chairperson of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and who was the driving force behind the Declaration.

To reaffirm our commitment to the principles of the Declaration and to honor the contributions of Eleanor Roosevelt, I hereby direct you to establish the Eleanor Roosevelt Award for Human Rights. You are authorized to take all necessary steps to establish an appropriate awards program under the auspices of your Department to recognize distinguished Americans who have made especially meritorious contributions to the promotion and protection of human rights within the United States or around the world.

These awards will be presented on or about December 10 of each year as part of the commemoration of the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Prior to November 15 of each year, you shall present to me a list of nominees from which I will select up to five individuals or groups of individuals to receive this award. In preparing your list of nominees, you may consider the recommendations of appropriate individuals and groups and coordinate your nominations in consultation with other Federal agencies as appropriate. You may include recommendations for posthumous awards.